Getting acquainted in interracial interactions:

Avoiding intimacy but approaching race

Camille S. Johnson

San Jose State University

Michael A. Olson

University of Tennessee

Russell H. Fazio

The Ohio State University

Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, in press

Abstract

It is important to understand the content dimensions that influence the quality of intergroup interactions. In the present research, we organize potential conversation content according to theoretically-relevant underlying dimensions and investigate Whites' willingness to discuss topics of varying content with a Black partner. Specifically, we investigated Whites' willingness to engage in intimate self-disclosure, and their willingness to discuss controversial and race-related topics with White versus Black interaction partners. Results across two experiments indicated an unwillingness among Whites to discuss both intimate and race-related topics with a Black partner. In addition, we examined the role played by participants in the interaction (i.e., asking versus answering). We found that although Whites were unwilling to *ask* Black relative to White partners about race-related topics, they were more willing to *answer* Black relative to White partners about such topics.

KEY WORDS: Intergroup interactions, self-disclosure, self-presentation, computer-mediated communication

New people constantly enter our lives. Whether those people become rivals, confidantes, or mates, they all start as strangers. On the one hand, one might think that no matter who one is meeting, the "getting-to-know-you" ritual is the same: two people meet, they exchange information, and then decide whether to continue the relationship. On the other hand, one can easily imagine situations in which the process is quite unique. For example, initial interactions with potential romantic partners often entail different concerns than initial interactions with potential study group partners. In the present research, we suggest that the types of information exchanged in interracial interactions are guided by some unique concerns (Dovidio, Gaertner, Kawakami, & Hodson, 2002; Shelton & Richeson, 2006). We argue that these unique concerns influence the content of what is discussed, particularly with regards to self-disclosure and the discussion of controversial topics such as race. Below, we first review why self-disclosure is important in interracial interactions and how such disclosure may be inhibited. Then, we discuss why race-related topics may be avoided in some contexts and welcomed in others by White interaction partners in interracial interactions.

Self-Disclosure

Self-disclosure has generally been found to increase affinity between interaction partners (Collins & Miller, 1994). The depth of self-disclosure may differ in terms of the level of intimacy of the shared information (Taylor & Altman, 1966) such that intimate topics (e.g. "Do you plan to get married?") represent a higher level of disclosure than less intimate topics (e.g. "What is your favorite color?"). The role of self-disclosure in the formation of close relationships has been well-studied and the research suggests that self-disclosure occurs when there is an initial liking or attraction between interaction partners

(Collins & Miller, 1994). Moreover, such disclosure appears to contribute to a positive feedback loop, as self-disclosure also tends to increase liking. That is, when individuals engage in appropriate levels of self-disclosure, their partners like them more. In addition, engaging in the act of self-disclosure increases the liking of the partner (Collins & Miller, 1994).

Research suggests that self-disclosure may be particularly beneficial to interracial interactions. Several theorists have shown that when interaction partners provide self-disclosing information, negative biases towards out-group members can be reduced (Bettencourt, Brewer, Croak, & Miller, 1992; Brewer & Miller, 1984, 1988; Ensari & Miller, 2002). For example, Ensari and Miller (2002) found that when out-group members provided self-disclosing information, they were perceived as trusting, friendly, and more desirable as a friend. They also found that intimate self-disclosure with more "typical" group members decreased intergroup bias compared to self-disclosure with less "typical" group members.

While we know that self-disclosure within interracial interactions can be beneficial, less is known about the extent to which self-disclosure *spontaneously* occurs in these settings. A frequent approach in these experiments (e.g., Ensari & Miller, 2002) is to manipulate the amount and type of self-disclosure, so that self-disclosure is a predictor of outcomes rather than the predicted variable. In the current research, we take a step back in the process and examine whether and when dominant group members actually exchange self-disclosing information in interracial interactions. Specifically, our objective is to examine the types of content that they are willing to discuss within these interactions. Our intuition is that White interaction partners will be reluctant to

spontaneously share intimate information with Blacks partners. In particular, we hypothesize that White partners will prefer to discuss neutral, low-intimacy topics with Black compared to White interaction partners. We elaborate on the factors that may underlie this tendency and expand on our predictions below.

Avoiding Self-disclosure

In interracial interactions, initial levels of liking and trust, as well as the motivation to create a positive relationship, may be lacking. For instance, Shelton and Richeson (2005) found that both Black and White participants expressed fear of rejection from out-group members and interpreted avoidance by out-group members as portends of that rejection. This fear of rejection is may inhibit self-disclosure and lead White interaction partners to attempt to avoid creating a negative impression, as opposed to actively seeking to create a positive impression (Arkin, 1981; Dunton & Fazio, 1997; Plant & Devine, 1998, 2003).

In addition, interracial interactions may be characterized as anxiety producing (Stephan & Stephan, 1985). A number of recent studies have documented the anxiety that results from interracial interaction and its consequences. For example, White partners in interracial interactions have shown "threat"-like cardiac responses (Blascovich, Mendes, Hunter, Lickel, & Kowai-Bell, 2001; Mendes, Blascovich, Lickel, & Hunter, 2002). The anxiety produced by interracial interactions also appears to drain self-regulatory resources. For example, Richeson and her colleagues (Richeson & Trawalter, 2005) found that following interracial interactions, White partners were slower in completing a Stroop color-naming task. Thus, fear of negative consequences can lead individuals to avoid interracial interactions (Shelton & Richeson, 2005), and fear of

negative consequences can make those interactions more fatiguing and difficult (Shelton & Richeson, 2006). And, in anticipation of these costs and concerns, many White individuals are only willing to enter into situations with Black individuals to the extent that those situations are relatively scripted and low in intimacy (Towles-Schwen & Fazio, 2003) and require divulging little personal information (Schofield, 1975).

Thus, a variety of factors ranging from self-presentational concerns to the physiological experience of anxiety may inhibit self-disclosure.

Avoiding Race

Thus far, we have suggested that initial interracial interactions are largely governed by self-protective motivations that reduce intimate self-disclosure. However, beyond levels of intimacy, concerns about self-presentation in interracial interactions may also influence the types of conversation topics that people are willing to discuss. That is, we suggest that the desire of White individuals to avoid offending their partners or appearing to be prejudiced might lead them to avoid race-related issues. Specifically, for White individuals, Black partners may initially be viewed as out-group members with which Whites have little in common. As a result, White individuals may rely on stereotypes suggesting that Black partners hold strong attitudes on certain controversial or racialized issues such as affirmative action. In addition, Whites may be concerned that a Black partner may endorse stereotypes about Whites (Vorauer & Kumhyr, 2001); perhaps, for example, that Whites are prejudiced (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003; Monin & Miller, 2001). In contexts where such evaluative concerns are salient, controversial discussion topics may elicit avoidant behavior (Goff, Steele, & Davies, 2008). In either case, it is likely that White partners may not wish to raise such topics themselves.

However, as we shall explain below, there may be situations where Whites may be particularly willing to discuss race with a Black interaction partner.

Interaction Roles and Self-disclosure

In addition to examining the types of information people are willing to *share* with an interaction partner, in the present research we also investigate the types of information that people are willing to *seek* from interaction partners. Initial interactions are generally not one-sided. That is, when meeting someone for the first time, individuals not only share information about themselves, but also seek information about the interaction partner. In addition, in some social situations, individuals may find themselves primarily in the role of asking rather than answering questions. For example, a lower status individual might take the role of answering questions while a higher status individual might take the role of asking questions. Therefore, in addition to examining what information individuals are willing share within an interracial interaction, we also examine the type of information they are willing to seek. We do so by considering the role one may take within an interaction.

When taking the role of the "asker," a number of norms may govern the selection of conversation topics. For instance, the willingness to discuss intimate conversational topics may be heavily influenced by the Gricean (1975) norm of reciprocity. According to this maxim, a level of reciprocity is required for a smooth conversation. That is, one should not ask more from another person than is offered and one should not offer more than one is asked. When in the asking role, this norm implies that that one should not ask another person to reveal more information than one is comfortable revealing about oneself. Therefore, if White partners are uncomfortable with self-disclosure of personal

information, they should not ask Black partners to provide such information. Thus, for the present purposes we would argue that White partners' willingness to discuss intimate topics should not differ in the asking or answering role: in both roles the broaching of such topics would require self-disclosure of personal information.

However, willingness to discuss race-related issues may be influenced by an additional set of norms and concerns that are tied to and individual's primary role in the interaction. That is, White partners' avoidance of race-related topics may not arise from discomfort with sharing opinions or beliefs, but from concerns about the impressions created by bringing up the topic themselves. For example, White partners may not feel that they have the standing or right to bring up discussions of discrimination (Miller, 1999). Although a White participant may hold egalitarian views on racialized issues and may believe that sharing these views would create affinity with Black partners, they may also feel that they lack the appropriate self-interest or standing (Miller, 1999) to raise them. Because they lack standing, they may feel that discussing these topics may have negative consequences, such as leaving the impression that one is insensitive or prejudiced. Thus, we argue that White partners' willingness to discuss race-related topics should differ as a function of their role: in the asking role, concerns about standing may inhibit willingness to broach race-related topics, and the alleviation of such concerns may translate into greater willingness discuss race-related topics in an answering role.

Present Research

As we have seen, the costs of interracial interactions are well-established (cf. Shelton & Richeson, 2006), and we have argued that such costs encourage superficial and perfunctory interracial contact and may initiate a cycle of avoidance and rejection. Thus,

the current research was concerned not with the *effects* of self-disclosure, but with the contents of disclosure that may occur in interracial interactions. First, following a method used in other studies of the effects of self-disclosure, we created a list of conversation topics that varied in controversiality, race-relatedness, level of intimacy and positivity (Ensari & Miller, 2002, Sedikides, Campbell, Reeder & Elliot, 1998). However, instead of manipulating the level of disclosure that occurred in the interaction by assigning participants to respond to or receive certain information (Ensari & Miller, 2002; Heatherton & Vohs, 2000), we assessed potential underlying determinants of the topics participants were willing to discuss with Black or White interaction partners. In the first study, participants were given a list of 88 topics and asked to indicate their willingness to discuss these topics with either a Black interaction partner or a White interaction partner. In the second study, participants were asked to select 12 items from a subset of these topics. Across these two studies, we tested two hypotheses. First, we tested the hypothesis that compared to interactions with same race partners, White individuals would provide and seek less intimate self-disclosure with a Black interaction partner. Second, we tested the hypothesis that compared to interactions with same race partners, White individuals would avoid broaching race-related topics, but would be willing to share their thoughts on these topics when asked by a Black partner.

Pilot Study

In Studies 1 and 2, our goal was to identify the characteristics of different conversation topics that would determine how willing White participants would be to discuss those topics. This design mirrored previous research focusing on self-disclosure

in interracial interactions in which topics were assigned to participants. However, rather than use a method of post-experimental coding of discussion topics, in the present case we "coded" the potential discussion topics a priori via pilot participants. We wished to present participants with a broad range of discussion topics and measure their willingness to discuss each of these topics. In order to create this pool of conversation topics, we cast a wide net in collecting potential topical questions. We looked to previous interaction research for topics (Taylor & Altman, 1966; Ensari & Miller, 2002, Sedikides, et al, 1998) and to that we added an additional set of self-generated items from popular ice-breaker games and books. The final set of 88 questions selected for pilot testing spanned a range of topics, such as School, Government and Politics, Social Issues, Friends and Family, Love and Romance, Spirituality, and Personal issues (see Appendix for a list of all questions). We suspected that these questions would vary widely in how willing people would be to answer them when posed by an interaction partner.

After finalizing the list of questions, we derived a set of question dimensions that we have argued are relevant to self-disclosure in dyadic interaction settings. In particular, we were interested in the extent to which each question involved intimate self-disclosure, or how much of oneself would be revealed in conversation surrounding the question. Moreover, we investigated the racialized nature of the questions in particular, and their controversy in general. Finally, we addressed the positivity of the questions and topics at an exploratory level, reasoning that a variable as fundamental as valence may influence topical selection in interracial interactions.

A set of participants (N= 80) then rated each of the 88 questions on each of the 4 dimensions. Because we were focusing on the perspective of White partners in these

studies, only ratings provided by White participants were used (N = 74). The dimensions were described to participants as follows:

> Intimacy: "Intimacy refers to how much of yourself you would be revealing if you answered that question. Topics that would lead to you revealing something very personal about yourself would be rated as intimate."
>
> Controversy: "Controversy refers to how "safe" or "hot" a particular topic is. If you feel like you would have to be very careful about what you say when answering this question, or that you might be uncomfortable talking about this topic because you would worry about the other person disagreeing, you would rate that question as controversial."
>
> Race-relatedness: "In asking some questions, you might expect that people of different cultural or racial backgrounds might have different answers. Race-related refers to whether or not you believe that a person's answer to the question would depend on their race."
>
> Positivity: "Positivity refers to how pleasant or unpleasant it would be talk about this topic with someone else. Positivity also refers to how enjoyable the topic is to discuss."

Ratings were made on a 1 ("Not all") to 5 ("Extremely/Very Much") scales (endpoints varied slightly depending on the attribute). Agreement across raters was quite high (alphas > .97), so the scores were averaged across raters for each question, resulting in a set of 4 dimension ratings for each of the 88 questions. Thus, for each question we derived an estimate of how much intimate self-disclosure would be required to answer it, how race-related it was, how controversial it would be to discuss, and its positivity (see Appendix).

We used these question dimension ratings to predict how White individuals would approach each of these 88 topics, depending upon the race of their anticipated interaction partner.

Experiment 1

Having determined how different conversation topics are perceived, Experiment 1 examined how those perceptions influence willingness to discuss those topics. White participants were asked to imagine interacting with a Black or White interaction partner and were asked to take on the role of asking questions or answering questions. Then, they were asked to report their willingness to discuss the conversation topics from the pilot study. This simple design allowed us to test our primary hypotheses. First, we expected that compared to interactions with same race partners, White individuals would provide and seek less intimate self-disclosure with a Black interaction partner. Second, we expected that compared to interactions with same race partners, White individuals would avoid asking about race-related topics, but would be relatively more willing to answer questions about those topics when asked by a Black partner.

In addition to testing our primary hypotheses, we also examined how partner race and participant role would interact with the controversiality and positivity of the questions. Examination of controversiality allowed us to determine whether a reluctance (or enthusiasm) for discussing certain topics resulted from a general attitude towards potentially contentious issues or from concerns more specific to the interracial context. We also examined the influence of question positivity. We tentatively speculate that if participants are approaching interracial and same-race interactions with the same goal of creating a positive interaction (as opposed to the goal of avoiding a negative interaction), then partner race effects should not emerge. However, if participants are approaching interracial and same-race interactions with different goals, willingness to discuss positive conversation topics may be affected by partner race.

Method

Participants

One hundred and thirty-three introductory psychology students at a large Midwestern university participated in a large classroom setting as an option for meeting course requirements. The data from ten Black participants was not included in analyses, leaving a sample of 63 females and 58 males (and 2 participants who did not report gender).

Materials and Procedure

The design of the experiment was a 2 (Partner Race: White vs. Black) by 2 (Role: Answer vs. Ask) between-subjects design. All experimental conditions were created through alteration of the experiment instructions. At the beginning of the session, all participants received a questionnaire packet entitled, "So, What Should We Talk About?" This packed consisted of instructions on the first page, followed by a series of questions. In all conditions, the instruction page stated, "Psychologists often study how people get to know each other. In this study, we're interested in the kinds of topics people talk about with someone they've just met. Specifically, we'd like to know how much you'd like to talk about a variety of issues with someone you've just met." Participants were told that because it is difficult to imagine talking about a given topic with a hypothetical stranger, we wished for them to imagine a specific target person with whom they would be interacting. The description of the target person comprised our manipulation of partner race, and included a photograph, the target's name, age, university affiliation, year in school, major, and minor.

Partner Race Conditions. In the White partner condition, the interaction partner was described as a White male named Justin West, age 21, who was a junior at the University of Illinois with a major in Business Administration and a minor in Psychology. The Black partner condition was identical except for the partner name (Jamal West), and included a photograph of Black male instead of a White male. The pictures had previously been matched for attractiveness.

Participant Role Conditions. Next, participants were asked to imagine that they had just been introduced to their partner through a mutual friend, who, after introductions, left the participant and their partner alone for a few minutes to "get to know one another." In the "Answer" condition, participants were further asked to imagine that their partner initiated the conversation by asking one of a number of questions that would appear on the following pages. The task presented to participants was to rate their willingness to answer each question on a 0 ("I would be not at all willing to answer the question") to 6 ("I would be very willing to answer the question") scale. In the "Ask" condition, participants were told to assume that they would be initiating the conversation with their interaction partner. Participants then rated their willingness to ask each question on a 0 ("I would be not at all willing to ask the question") to 6 ("I would be very willing to ask the question") scale.

In all conditions, the next five pages of the survey consisted of the set of questions to which participants were asked to respond. The top of every question page featured a small thumbnail image of their interaction partner next to the phrase, "Imagine Justin [Jamal] asks you…" to remind participants to hold their hypothetical interaction partner

in memory while responding to the items. The items themselves consisted of the 88 questions rated by pre-test participants.

After responding to all questions, participants recorded their ethnicity, year in school, and gender, and were then thanked and dismissed.

Results

Analysis Strategy

We predicted that regardless of role, participants would want to avoid highly intimate topics with a Black partner. We also expected that when in the answering role, participants would be more willing to discuss race-related topics with Black partners compared to when in the asking role. We expected that partner race would not affect willingness to discuss other controversial topics, but that, reflecting a general tendency towards avoidance, participants would be much less willing to discuss positive topics with Black partners compared to White partners, regardless of role.

While the experimental design of the study was a 2 (race of partner) x 2 (ask vs. answer role) between-subjects design, testing of the hypotheses required a method that could take into account the continuous nature of Question Dimensions as a predictor of willingness. Therefore, we tested a 2 (Partner Race: Black vs. White) x 2 (Role: Ask vs. Answer) x 4 (Question Dimensions: Intimacy vs. Controversy vs. Race-relatedness vs. Positivity) mixed-design predicting participants' willingness estimates. Because the design included continuous variables (Question dimensions) as predictors, a mixed-ANOVA could not be conducted. Instead, we followed the analytic procedure detailed by Darlington (1990) for a mixed-model regression. In accord with Darlington's recommendations, we treated the conversation topic as the unit of analysis and collapsed

across participants in each of the four experimental conditions (Black partner/ask, White partner/ask, Black partner/answer, White partner/answer) to derive a mean willingness scores for each condition. The resulting willingness scores were was used in a series of regression analysis in which willingness was the criterion variable and question ratings were the predictors. To examine interaction effects, we created between-condition difference scores by subtracting the mean willingness score of one condition (e.g. Black partner/Ask) from the mean willingness score of another condition (e.g. Black partner/Answer), as advocated by Darlington (1990). Illustrations and guides to the analyses used in Experiment 1 can be found in Table 1 and Table 2. Table 1 describes the calculations and interpretations of the predictor variables used in the analyses, while Table 2 presents the results of the regressions.

Preliminary Analyses: Question Dimensions, Role, and Dimensions x Role

Question Dimensions. To examine the main effects of the question dimensions on participant willingness, collapsing across Partner Race and Role, the four question dimensions were entered simultaneously in a regression equation predicting participant willingness. The analysis revealed main effects for all of the dimensions except controversy (see Table 2, Model 1). As might be expected, ratings on the intimacy dimension were negatively associated with willingness to discuss, and positivity ratings were positively associated. Interestingly, race-relatedness was also positively associated with willingness to discuss.

Role. Next, we examined effects of Role, collapsing across Partner Race. A Role effect term was computed by subtracting the mean of the willingness estimates of the Ask conditions from the mean of the willingness estimates of the Answer conditions. As

shown in Table 2, Model 2, role significantly influenced willingness. A significant intercept indicated that on average participants were more willing to answer questions (M = 4.67, SD = .63) than to ask questions (M = 3.49, SD = .94), t (87) = 3.15, $p < .01$, d = .68.

Significant effects were found for controversy and positivity (see Table 2, Model 2). Participants were more willing to answer, relative to ask, questions rated high in controversy. That is, the general preference for answering over asking was more pronounced as the controversy associated with a question increased. Participants were also more willing to ask, relative to answer, questions rated high in positivity. That is, as the positivity of a question increased, the overall preference for answering over asking was reduced.

Primary Analyses

Race. To examine the overall effect of race, a Partner Race term was computed by subtracting the mean of the willingness estimates of the White Partner conditions from the mean of the willingness estimates of the Black Partner conditions. As shown in Table 2, Model 3, this term was then regressed on the four attribute factors simultaneously. A significant intercept indicated that on average (and across Role), participants claimed to be more willing to engage in conversation with a Black partner (M = 4.11, SD = .76) relative to a White partner (M = 4.04, SD = .74), t (87) = 6.28, $p < .01$, d = 1.35. However, this effect was qualified by an interaction with Role, to be discussed shortly.

Race x Question Dimension. Our results were consistent with our expectation that White participants would be less willing to discuss more intimate questions with a Black partner. Supporting this primary hypothesis, the preference for conversing with a White

over a Black increased as question intimacy increased (see Table 2, Model 3). In addition, as we expected, participants were less willing to discuss more race-related topics and topics that are more positive with a Black relative to a White interaction partner. No differences in willingness to discuss controversial topics emerged as a result of partner race.

Race x Role. A Race X Role term was computed as described in Table 1, Model 4. This term was then regressed on the four rating dimensions simultaneously. Table 2, Model 4 presents the results of this analysis. A significant effect of intercept indicated an interaction effect of Partner Race and Role on willingness. Follow-up analyses revealed that, regardless of topic type, when in an asking role, participants indicated a greater willingness to ask questions of a Black (M = 3.59, SD = .95) relative to a White interaction partner (M = 3.39, SD = .95), t (87) = 5.57, $p < .01$, d = 1.19. Participants were also marginally less willing to answer questions posed by a Black (M = 4.63, SD = .72) compared to a White partner (M = 4.70, SD = .60), t (87) = 1.33, p = .18, d = .29.

Question Dimensions and Race x Role. Consistent with our second primary hypothesis, as shown in Table 2, Model 4, a Partner Race X Role interaction was revealed for the race-relatedness dimension. The form of this interaction is most readily seen in the relationships between the Black – White difference score and race-relatedness in the Ask vs. Answer conditions. When in an asking role, race-relatedness negatively predicted the Black-White difference score, b = -.35, t (87) = 3.41, $p < .01$. That is, participants reported decreased willingness to ask questions of a Black partner relative to a White partner as question race-relatedness increased. In the answer condition, on the other hand, the pattern is reversed; race-relatedness positively predicts the Black – White

difference score, $b = .27$, $t\ (87) = 2.57$, $p = .01$. Here, participants were more willing to answer questions from a Black partner relative to a White partner as question race-relatedness increased.

Also as predicted, willingness to discuss positive topics and willingness to discuss controversial topics were not influenced by the interactive effect of race and role. As shown in Table 2, Model 4, a theoretically irrelevant interaction also emerged involving the intimacy factor.

Discussion

Experiment 1 provided a portrait White Americans' willingness to share information with Black interaction partners. Overall, White participants wished to avoid discussions of intimate and personal topics with a Black partner, just as we predicted. Participants were also reluctant to pose race-related questions to a Black partner. However, when put in the position of answering questions, a more passive role in an interaction, White individuals were more willing to answer questions about race with a Black partner relative to a White partner. Thus, role in the interaction moderated participant willingness to discuss race.

In addition, effects for controversiality and positivity were found. Reflecting a general desire to avoid contention, participants showed a reluctance to bring up controversial topics regardless of partner race. That is, participants were less willing to discuss controversial topics with both Black and White partners. This suggests that the race effect found for willingness to discuss race-related topics was not driven by a general desire to avoid contention. Rather, it suggests that the avoidance of race-related topics with Black partners reflected participant concerns surrounding talking about race

in interracial contexts. In addition, as predicted, participants expressed less willingness to discuss positive topics with Black partner relative to White partners. This finding may reflect their more general desire to avoid even positive interracial interactions.

Experiment 2

Experiment 1 used a hypothetical situation – individuals were asked to imagine what they might do when interacting with a same-race or other-race interaction partner. Such an approach allowed us to investigate a larger number of conversation topics. However, willingness estimates might have been influenced by social desirability concerns and individuals might have expressed greater willingness to confront race-related topics knowing that they would never have to actually broach such subjects. Therefore, Experiment 2 sought to replicate these results in a more realistic environment, where participants believed that an actual interaction was imminent.

Participants were recruited to participate in an on-line video conference study. Unlike in Experiment 1, in Experiment 2 they were led to believe that they would actually interact with someone. As in Experiment 1, participants were assigned to either an ask or answer role with a different-race or same-race partner. Then, they were asked to select from a small number of conversation topics which were selected for the levels of intimacy and race-relatedness. We also included topics that varied in levels of positivity in an attempt to replicate the findings of Experiment 1. By the same reasoning, given that there were no effects of controversiality in Experiment, and for methodological purposes, topics varying in levels of non-race-related controversiality were not included.

Method

Participants

Sixty-three introductory psychology students at a large Southeastern university participated in individual sessions. The data from 8 Black participants were not included in analyses, and one participant was dropped from analyses for failing to complete critical measures, leaving a sample of 54 non-Black participants in the analyses.

Materials and Procedure

As in Experiment 1, the design of the experiment was a 2 (Partner Race: White vs. Black) by 2 (Role: Answer vs. Ask) between-subjects factorial design. All conditions were created through manipulation of the instructions.

Participants reported to the lab for an experiment on video conferencing. In all conditions, they were told that the experimenters were interested in how people "get to know one another" in the context of video conferences. Participants were told that they would be engaging in a video email interaction with a student at another large university and that they would be assigned to ask questions or answer questions. Furthermore, the experimenter explained that because it can be somewhat "weird" to chat over email with a complete stranger, a list of "ice breaker" questions would be provided. The experimenter then took a photograph of the participant with a digital camera (as part of the cover story) and asked participants to look over and rate these "ice breaker" questions on-line while the photo was uploaded and the computer link was being established.

All questions were completed on a computer using a web-based interface. In all conditions, the first screen of the program reiterated the cover story and asked participants to enter their Participant ID number, their first name, their major, year in school, and university. The second screen presented the participants with a photo of their interaction partner, which had presumably just been uploaded, as well as their partner's

name (“Jason West”), major (“business administration”), year (“junior”), and university affiliation (“Ohio State University”).

Partner Race. The computer randomly assigned participants to the Black or White partner; experimenters were blind to participant condition. In the Black partner condition, the photo accompanying the partner information was of a Black male and in the White partner condition, the photo was of a White male. The photos were matched previously in attractiveness.

Participant Role. A second screen informed participants as to whether they were in the Ask or Answer condition.

Topic Selection. Because we thought it would appear unrealistic for participants to rate all 88 questions, they were presented with a smaller set of questions drawn from the list used in Experiment 1. To generate the smaller set, three questions were selected that loaded high on intimacy (“Describe your first love”), but not on race-relatedness or positivity, and three questions were selected that loaded low on intimacy, but not on race-relatedness or positivity (“Describe your favorite instructor”). The product was a list of 6 questions that were either high or low in intimacy, but moderate on other dimensions. In a similar vein, six questions were selected to represent high and low values for the race-relatedness and positivity factors. These items are indicated with asterisks in the Appendix. Three screens randomly presented participants with six conversation questions, grouped by dimension, and asked them to select which four questions they would like to ask or answer, in order of preference. After selecting four questions from each set of six, participants were told that the video email session would begin after a final set of ratings.

At the conclusion of the study, before debriefing for suspicion, manipulation check measures were administered. Participants were asked to rate the 18 conversation topics in terms of their race-relatedness, positivity, and intimacy. A series of *t*-tests confirmed the efficacy of the manipulations: participants rated the high intimacy questions higher in intimacy than the low intimacy questions, high race-related questions higher in race-relatedness than the low race–related questions, and the high positivity questions higher in positivity than the low positivity questions. All effect sizes (Cohen's d) were greater than 2.

Results

Analysis Strategy

We hypothesized that participants' willingness to discuss different questions with a Black versus a White partner would vary as a consequence of the question dimensions (e.g. level of intimacy, and race-relatedness, and positivity) and their role in the interaction (e.g. asker or answerer). We expected that willingness would be reflected in which questions participants selected. That is, when presented with six questions ranging in levels of intimacy, we expected that participants would select questions higher in intimacy when interacting with a White partner than when interacting with a Black partner. We also expected that participants would select more race-related questions to answer from a Black relative to a White partner, but would select less race-related questions to ask a Black relative to a White partner.

To test these hypotheses, we used pre-test ratings of each question on the relevant dimensions (from the pilot study) to examine the effect of question dimensions on participants' willingness to discuss.[1] Specifically, we inserted the mean pre-test value on

the dimension (e.g., intimacy) for each question a given participant chose to discuss with his or her partner. Thus, a participant who chose Question 44 ("Describe your first love") as their first question to ask or answer would receive an intimacy score of 4.21 for their first ranked item, as that was the mean pre-test rating of intimacy for this item. Because participants ranked 4 items, four "Rank" scores for each dimension (intimacy, positivity, and race-relatedness) were obtained. In a subsequent mixed-design ANOVA, Rank was treated as a within-subject factor with 4 levels. Therefore, our hypotheses were tested using a 2 (Partner Race: Black vs. White) x 2 (Role: ask vs. answer) x 4 (Rank of question) mixed-design ANOVA, with Rank as a within-subject factor. These analyses were conducted separately for the intimacy, race-relatedness, and positivity question sets.

Preliminary Analyses: Question Dimensions and Role

An overall Rank effect of the intimacy questions ($F(1, 150) = 6.35$, $p < .01$) was found, which was more clearly captured in the linear effect, $F(1, 50) = 15.48$, $p < .01$. Not surprisingly, this finding indicated that participants chose less intimate questions in their earlier choices. Analogous linear effects were found for race-relatedness ($F(1, 50) = 26.59$, $p < .01$) and positivity, $F(1, 50) = 20.90$, $p < .01$. Specifically, participants chose less race-related and more positive questions earlier in their selections.

Replicating Experiment 1, there was a main effect of Role among the intimacy questions, $F(1, 50) = 6.96$, $p = .01$. Participants in the ask condition chose questions higher in intimacy ($M = 2.85$, $SD = .30$) than participants in the answer condition ($M = 2.64$, $SD = .25$). A Role by Rank interaction was also found among the intimacy questions, $F(3, 150) = 3.25$, $p < .05$. While the overall linear trend was highly significant, $F(1, 50) = 15.48$, $p < .01$), it was only apparent for the answer condition, $F(1,$

25) = 25.17, $p < .01$ ($F < 1$ in the ask condition). Specifically, participants chose less intimate questions to answer for their earlier relative to their later choices. There were no main effects of Role or Role X Rank interactions for the positivity or race-related items.

Primary Analyses

Intimacy. Replicating Experiment 1, there was a reduced willingness to discuss intimate topics with a Black partner. Specifically, participants chose less intimate questions when anticipating an interaction with a Black partner ($M = 2.69$, $SD = .23$) relative to White partner ($M = 2.84$, $SD = .22$), $F(1, 50) = 6.32$, $p = .01$. This difference was most apparent on participants' first choices: participants chose less intimate questions for Black partner $M = 2.30$ ($SD = .51$) relative to White partner $M = 2.70$ ($SD = .70$), $t(52) = 2.32$, $p < .05$, although the pattern was apparent across their first 3 selections (*t*s were between 1.6 and 2.32).

Race-relatedness. As in Experiment 1, we expected that in the Asking role, participants would avoid race-related topics with Black partners relative to White partners. However, in an Answering role, participants were expected to favor race-related topics with Black partners relative to White partners. Consistent with expectations, the Partner Race X Role interaction was evident for the race-related questions, $F(1, 50) = 6.07$, $p = .02$. The pattern of this effect mirrored results from Experiment 1: participants preferred to ask less race-related questions of a Black partner ($M = 2.03$, $SD = .10$) relative to a White partner ($M = 2.19$, $SD = .33$), $t(26) = 1.80$, $p = .04$, one-tailed, $d = .71$. However, they preferred to answer more race-related questions of a Black partner ($M = 2.35$, $SD = .41$) relative to a White partner (M = 2.06, SD = .27), $t(24) = 2.09$, $p < .05$, one-tailed, $d = .85$; see Figure 1.

Additional Findings

Replicating the pattern of findings from Experiment 1, there was a marginal effect of partner race among the positivity questions, ($F(1, 50) = 2.72$, $p = .10$), such that more positive questions were chosen when one's anticipated partner was White (M =3.62, SD = .22) rather than Black (M = 3.52, SD = .28).

A marginal 3-way, Partner Race X Role X Rank interaction appeared for the positivity items, $F(3, 50) = 2.64$, $p = .06$. Follow-up analyses indicated that the 2-way, Partner Race X Role interaction in the form described above was significant for the 4th ranked item, $F(1, 50) = 5.43$, $p < .05$. The pattern was such that participants were nonsignificantly more willing to ask more positive questions of a Black partner (M = 3.53, SD = .94) relative to a White partner (M = 3.17, SD = 1.05), $t < 1$, but were significantly less willing to ask more positive questions of a Black partner (M = 2.79, SD = .80) relative to a White partner (M = 3.61, SD = .93), t (24) = 2.42, $p < .05$, d = .98.

Discussion

Experiment 2 presented participants with what they believed to be an actual pending interaction and allowed them to select questions to answer or ask their interaction partner. Replicating Experiment 1, the race of the interaction partner influenced the topics that participants were willing to discuss. They were less likely to choose intimate topics to discuss with Black partners, regardless of their role in the interaction. In addition, replicating Experiment 1, whether participants believed they would be answering the question or asking the question influenced the topics they were willing to discuss. When they were answering questions, they were more willing to answer race-related questions with Black partners than to ask such questions. Similarly,

the general tendency to avoid interaction with Black partners was reflected in the lesser willingness to ask Black partners relative to White partners about positive topics.

General Discussion

In the present research, we presented participants with contemporary topics of discussion and examined how the race of the interaction partner influenced willingness to discuss those topics. First, we focused on the level of intimate self-disclosure that is likely to occur in interracial interactions. Second, we examined the willingness with which individuals approached discussions of race-related topics. We also examined their willingness to discuss controversial and positive topics. These results revealed White individuals preferences in approaching interracial interactions and provide an intriguing picture of both avoidance of intimacy and a willingness to engage in perhaps difficult discussions, under the right circumstances.

With regards to intimate self-disclosure, we found that, as expected, White partners were less willing to answer and ask questions regarding intimate topics with a Black partner. While not surprising given the anxiety and concerns surrounding interracial interactions, these results do suggest that the type of disclosure that creates liking is not likely to spontaneously occur. Such topics, one would think, would provide the greatest opportunity for finding common ground. After all, love of family and friendships are universally human experiences. However, such topics are also more self-disclosing and provide more valuable and personal information. Thus, it appears that when faced with a choice between protecting the self and finding common ground, White partners tend to engage in behavior that protects themselves rather than builds a relationship with their Black partners.

Second, with regards to race-related topics, we found interesting discrepancies between the willingness of White participants to respond to questions and their willingness to raise such questions with a Black partner. Whereas Whites were willing to engage in dialogue with Black partners regarding race-related topics, they were only willing to do so if the Black partner raised the topic. That is, when it came to conversation topics that were likely more threatening (Goff et al., 2008), White individuals were less willing to initiate such discussions. However, they appeared to be willing to discuss these race-related issues with a Black partner as long as their partner initiated the conversation. Thus, it appears that in interracial interactions, from the perspective of Whites, the onus may fall upon Black partners to create meaningful dialogue.

The meaning of roles

Our findings revealed an intriguing and important moderator of willingness: the role of the participant as asking or answering questions. Such roles naturally occur in daily life. For example, a subordinate might take the role of answering questions while a superior might take the role of asking questions. In such situations, the willingness of superiors to learn about and engage with subordinates may have consequences for the performance level of the subordinate. If leaders fail to solicit self-disclosure from subordinates, it may impede the development of the relationship between leader and follower with negative consequences for the follower, particularly in situations in which an affinity may not naturally or quickly emerge, such as when they are members of two different groups (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). We suspect that participants' roles, which

have received little attention in the intergroup contact literature (for an exception, see Dovidio & Gaertner, 1981), may be critical in contact situations.

In Experiment 1, participants preferred to answer questions of White partners and ask them of Black partners. This finding is not surprising considering the research suggesting that being the questioner may be associated with greater status or power (Ross, Amabile, & Steinmetz, 1977). For instance, if one is framing the questions and guiding the discussion, one can ask questions that confirm hypotheses (Darley, et al., 1988) or that make one appear more intelligent (Ross et al, 1977). Thus, the preference for White participants to want to guide and control interactions with Black partners fits with the preference for White participants to engage in scripted, predictable interactions with Black partners (Towles-Schwen & Fazio, 2003). Similarly, the preference for White participants to relinquish control of the situation when the conversation is about race-related issues was expected. While White individuals are willing to talk about those topics with Black partners, their willingness is limited to situations in which the Black partner is responsible for broaching them. Thus, when it comes to talking about important and meaningful issues, White individuals prefer to play a more passive role in the discussion.

There are a number of reasons that this preference regarding race-related topics may arise, and certainly, this preference may be highly adaptive and functional. For example, White individuals may feel that they lack the appropriate standing (Miller, 1999) to raise such issues and that asking such questions might reflect poorly on them. Alternatively, it could be that the broaching of race-related topics by Black partners were seen by Whites as tests, or challenges. If the Whites answered “correctly”, they would

gain moral credentials as non-prejudiced (Monin & Miller, 2001); if they failed to answer the questions or appeared unwilling to discuss the topics, they might be branded as prejudiced or biased. Alternatively, those topics could be viewed as opportunities for Whites to appear egalitarian.

The fact that similar patterns were not found for willingness to discuss controversial topics that were not race-related suggests that Whites individuals are not merely attempting to avoid contention, but are influenced by factors associated with interracial interactions in particular. Further research could examine whether and when Whites view topics as threats or opportunities and perhaps how controversy and race-relatedness intersect and diverge.

Avoidant (and Benevolent?) Motivations

Even when the topics of conversation were positive, White individuals were less willing to discuss them with a Black partner than with a White partner. This supports the idea that White individuals are not focused on creating a positive image for the self, but are engaging in avoidant presentational styles. While this may be somewhat disheartening, the finding that this preference was not affected by the asking or answering role should not be. That is, one could argue that if Whites individuals hold negative stereotypes of their Black partners, they might also prefer topics that would allow them to confirm those stereotypes (Leyens, 1989). That is, when in the asking role, they might engage in hypothesis confirmation (Darley et al, 1988; Hodgins & Zuckerman, 1991) and select questions or topics that would not provide Black partners with opportunities to create a positive impression. This effect was not found. In both the asking and answering role, with Black partners, White individuals were reluctant to discuss even

positive topics. Thus, while this research presents White individuals as relatively avoidant, they do not appear to be sabotaging the self-presentations of Black partners.

Future Directions

We focused on the types of topics White individuals were willing to talk about and willing to ask of a Black partner, and found a discrepancy between their willingness to talk about race-related topics and their willingness to ask about those same topics. One could interpret that discrepancy as an act of distancing by White individuals from Black interaction partners— an unwillingness to get to know their partners and allow their partners to get to know them. However, our studies do not address the efficacy of these self-presentational strategies. One could imagine that avoiding race-related topics with out-group members is an effective way of avoiding confrontation and is effective, at least in short-term interactions, for certain kinds of people. In many casual social situations, avoidance of religion, politics, and money may be useful for avoiding conflict. However, this same strategy may be less useful over time (Plant, 2004), or in situations where long-term and substantive relationships are desired. For example, avoidance of intimacy may be viewed with skepticism by coworkers or partners. In addition, the positive effects of self-disclosing personal information may arise either from increasing the depth of the self-disclosure or from increasing the breadth of self-disclosure, within limits (Taylor & Altman, 1966). Here, particularly in Experiment 2, we chose to examine the depth of disclosure in a discrete interaction. An examination of the breadth of disclosure, over time, would also prove fruitful.

Thus, future research should examine the effectiveness of the strategies employed by our participants. In addition, they should explore the dynamic nature of disclosure,

reciprocation, and trust that might occur over time. Rather than view the self-protective motivations of White individuals with disdain, the greater challenge is to understand the sources of these motivations, to determine if these motivations should be changed, and how these motivations can be changed.

Similarly, interracial interactions from the Black partner's perspective obviously must be examined. While interracial interactions may be associated with greater anxiety and unique concerns compared to same-race interactions for both parties, those sources of anxiety and concerns may function differently for Black and White partners. That is, whereas White partners may be reluctant to initiate discussions of race-related topics because of concerns regarding their standing, Black partners may be eager to initiate such a discussion because they believe they have the standing to do so. Thus, while the key factors in determining the content of interracial interactions may remain the same, the direction of influence wielded by those factors may depend on one's race (Trawalter & Richeson, 2008).

Conclusions and Implications

Previous research has demonstrated the positive effects of self-disclosure in interracial interactions (Ensari & Miller, 2003). However, this literature has offered little in the way of describing the conditions under which self-disclosure actually occurs. The present research aimed to fill this gap by systematically investigating how different dimensions of the various topics might influence how willing White partners would be to discuss them. We found that self-disclosure does not come easily or, perhaps, naturally. However, it does appear that if more substantive issues are raised by their Black partner, Whites are willing to discuss them. These findings appear to fit well within the

framework of research on mixed-race groups. For example, Sommers and Ellsworth (2000) found that while all-White juries were less likely to engage in discussions about race-related issues and to consider race when it was not made salient to them, racially mixed-juries and White jurists made aware of race-related issues were less biased in their judgments. Thus, as in our studies, when race-related topics are raised, White individuals are able and willing to discuss them. Perhaps, as shown in Sommers and Ellsworth's research, these discussions might reduce bias in decision-making contexts.

In addition, the present research provides some insight into dominant group members' roles in creating disclosure in initial interracial interactions, and it highlights the obstacles that may hamper interracial interactions from the outset. Interestingly, similar effects were found in the face-to-face scenario and computer-mediated interaction settings, which may be considered analogous to many modern "virtual" social interactions (A. Johnson, 2001), such as those that occur on popular social networking websites. This suggests that even in the absence of physical, face to face interactions in a new electronic world, interracial interactions may still be fraught with anxiety, concern, and obstacles.

References

Arkin, R. M. (1981). Self-presentation styles. In J. T. Tedeschi (Ed.), *Impression management and social psychological research* (pp. 311-333). New York: Academic.

Bettencourt, B. A., Brewer, M. B., Croak, M. R., & Miller, N. (1992). Cooperation and the reduction of intergroup bias: The role of reward structure and social orientation. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 28,* 301-319.

Blascovich, J., Mendes, W. B., Hunter, S. B., Lickel, B., & Kowai-Bell, N. (2001). Perceiver threat in social interactions with stigmatized others. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 80,* 253-267.

Brewer, M. B., & Miller, N. (1984). Beyond the contact hypothesis: Theoretical perspectives on desegregation. In N. Miller & M. B. Brewer (Eds.), *Groups in contact: The psychology of desegregation* (pp. 281-302). New York: Academic Press.

Brewer, M. B., & Miller, N. (Eds.). (1988). *Contact and cooperation: When do they work?* New York, NY, US: Plenum Press.

Collins, N. L., & Miller, L. C. (1994). Self-disclosure and liking: A meta-analytic review. *Psychological Bulletin, 116,* 457-475.

Crandall, C. S., & Eshleman, A. (2003). A justification-suppression of the expression and experience of prejudice. *Psychological Bulletin, 129*(3), 414-446.

Darlington, R. B. (1990). *Regression and linear models.* New York: McGraw-Hill.

Darley, J. M., Fleming, J. H., Hilton, J. L., & Swann, W. B. (1988). Dispelling negative expectancies: The impact of interaction goals and target characteristics on the

expectancy confirmation process. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 24*(1), 19-36.

Dovidio, J. F., & Gaertner, S. E. (1981). The effects of race, status, and ability on helping behavior. *Social Psychology Quarterly, 44,* 192-203.

Dovidio, J. F., Gaertner, S. E., Kawakami, K., & Hodson, G. (2002). Why can't we just get along? Interpersonal biases and interracial distrust.

Dunton, B. C., & Fazio, R. H. (1997). An individual difference measure of motivation to control prejudiced reactions. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 23,* 316-326.

Ensari, N., & Miller, N. (2002). The out-group must not be so bad after all: The effects of disclosure, typicality, and salience on intergroup bias. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 83*(2), 313-329.

Goff, P. A., Steele, C. M., & Davies, P. G. (2008). The space between us: Stereotype threat and distance in interracial contexts. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 94*(1), 91-107.

Graen, G. B., & Uhl-Bien, M. (1995). Relationship-based approach to leadership: Development of leader-member exchange (LMX) theory of leadership over 25 years: Applying a multi-level multi-domain perspective. *The Leadership Quarterly, 6*(2), 219-247.

Grice, H. P. (1975). Logic and conversation. In P. Cole and J.L. Morgan, (eds.): *Syntax and Semantics, Vol. 3, Speech Acts.* New York: Academic Press.

Hodgins, H. S. & Zuckerman, M. (1991) Beyond selecting information: Biases in spontaneous questions and resultant conclusions. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 29, 387-407.

Johnson, A. N. (2001). Self-disclosure in computer-mediated communication: The role of self-awareness and visual anonymity. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 31, 177-192.

Leyens, J. (1989). Another look at confirmatory strategies during a real interview. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 19, 255-262.

Mendes, W. B., Blascovich, J., Lickel, B., & Hunter, S. (2002). Challenge and threat during social interaction with white and black men. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 28,* 939-952.

Monin, B. T., & Miller, D. T. (2001). Moral credentials and the expression of prejudice. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 81*(1), 33-43.

Parks, M. R., Eggert, L. L., Jones, W. H., & Perlman, D. (1991). The role of social context in the dynamics of personal relationships. In *Advances in personal relationships: A research annual, Vol. 2.* (pp. 1-34). Oxford, England: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Plant, E. A. (2004). Responses to Interracial Interactions Over Time. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 30*(11), 1458-1471.

Plant, E. A., & Devine, P. G. (1998). Internal and external motivation to respond without prejudice. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 75,* 811-832.

Plant, E. A., & Devine, P. G. (2003). The antecedents and implications of interracial anxiety. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 29,* 790-801.

Richeson, J. A., & Trawalter, S. (2005). Why do interracial interactions impair executive function? A resource depletion account. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 88,* 934-947.

Ross, L. D., Amabile, T. M., & Steinmetz, J. L. (1977). Social roles, social control, and biases in social-perception processes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 35*(7), 485-494.

Schofield, J. W. (1975). Effect of norms, public disclosure, and need for approval on volunteering behavior consistent with attitudes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 31*(6), 1126-1133.

Sedikides, C., Campbell, W. K., Reeder, G., & Elliot, A. J. (1998). The self-serving bias in relational context. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 74, 378-386.

Shelton, J. N., & Richeson, J. A. (2005). Intergroup contact and pluralistic ignorance. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 88,* 91-107.

Shelton, J. N., & Richeson, J. A. (2006). Interracial interactions: A relational approach. In *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology,* (Vol. 38, pp. 121-181).

Sommers, S. R., & Ellsworth, P. C. (2000). Race in the courtroom: Perceptions of guilt and dispositional attributions. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 26,* 1367-1379.

Stephan, W. G., & Stephan, C. W. (1985). Intergroup anxiety. *Journal of Social Issues, 41,* 157-175.

Taylor, D. A., & Altman, I. (1966). Intimacy-scaled stimuli for use in studies of interpersonal relations. *Psychological Reports, 19*(3), 729-730.

Towles-Schwen, T., & Fazio, R. H. (2003). Choosing social situations: The relation between automatically activated racial attitudes and anticipated comfort interacting with African-Americans. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 29,* 170-182.

Trawalter, S., & Richeson, J.A. (2008). Let's talk about race, baby! When Whites' and Blacks' contact experiences diverge. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 44,* 1214-1217.

Vorauer, J., & Kumhyr, S. M. (2001). Is this about you or me? Self- versus other-directed judgments and feelings in response to intergroup interaction. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 27*(6), 706-719.

Appendix

Questions and Question Ratings. (Starred items were used in Experiment 2)*

	Intimacy	Controversy	Race-related	Positivity
1. How diverse is your school?*	2.04	2.07	3.87	2.99
2. If you hadn't gone to this school, where else might you have gone?	2.24	1.63	2.71	3.13
3. What is your favorite thing about your school?	2.10	1.69	2.34	3.89
4. What are some of your favorite restaurants in the area surrounding your school?	1.87	1.43	1.96	4.09
5. Describe your favorite instructor. *	2.51	1.89	1.90	3.80
6. What is your least favorite thing about your school?	2.54	1.96	2.26	2.64
7. What do you do on weekends? *	3.43	2.00	2.00	4.04
8. What would you do if you failed out of school?	3.49	2.49	2.30	2.11
9. Describe the size and social climate of your high school.	2.10	2.17	3.19	2.93
10. What subject do you have the most trouble with? *	2.70	1.74	1.56	2.33
11. What is your opinion about the Greek system? Do you plan to rush?	3.01	3.11	2.69	2.86
12. Would you consider yourself a Republican, a Democrat, or an Independent?	3.57	4.14	3.16	2.61
13. Do you believe that everyone is treated equally in American society, regardless of race, gender, or religion? *	3.66	4.29	4.30	2.53
14. What do you believe it means to be a "good American citizen?"	3.16	3.64	2.87	2.90
15. What is the most important problem facing American society today? *	3.24	4.17	3.57	2.33
16. How would you feel if they reinstituted the Draft?	3.44	4.30	2.44	1.99
17. Should there be a limit on how much large companies can contribute to political campaigns?	2.53	3.70	1.76	2.36
18. Have you ever been involved in student government? If so, how?	2.00	1.57	1.47	3.04
19. Is the United States too dependent on foreign oil?	2.66	3.93	1.71	2.53
20. What are your feelings about abortion?	4.06	4.79	2.09	1.97
21. What are your feelings about affirmative action? *	3.60	4.43	2.90	2.01
22. How do you feel about the death penalty?	3.79	4.64	2.16	1.97
23. Describe a time you felt discriminated against.	3.89	3.34	4.19	1.89
24. What are your feelings about funding for education?	2.76	3.23	2.63	2.70

25. Should homosexual marriages be legal?	3.81	4.70	1.90	2.03
26. How do you feel about gun laws? Should they be more or less restrictive?	3.00	4.06	2.34	2.37
27. Should mothers stay at home and care for their children? Why or why not?	3.27	3.57	2.19	2.67
28. Describe your relationship with your parents.	3.89	2.03	2.09	3.47
29. Are your parents married? How would your life be different if the opposite were true?	3.77	2.47	2.04	2.83
30. What is the worst thing a friend could do to you? *	3.86	2.73	1.67	1.87
31. What is the hardest part about making new friends for you?	3.59	2.01	1.93	2.26
32. Would you consider yourself easy to get to know?	2.73	1.67	1.41	3.40
33. Describe the last time you helped someone in a substantial way.	2.89	1.60	1.33	3.81
34. Who do you live with? Describe how you and your roommates get along. *	2.89	1.87	1.79	3.60
35. What kinds of people do you like to have as friends?	3.19	1.96	2.54	4.04
36. Do you like your name? What would you change it to if you could?	2.13	1.49	1.67	3.74
37. Did you have a nickname as a child? Do you have one now?	2.11	1.21	1.53	3.74
38. How did you celebrate your last birthday? *	2.21	1.41	1.40	4.09
39. If you could change something about the way you look, what would it be?	3.53	2.24	1.91	2.80
40. Describe your relationship with your most recent boss.	2.54	1.87	1.60	3.23
41. Who was the first person you spoke with today? What happened?	2.16	1.34	1.37	3.41
42. Where are you from originally? Where are your parents from?	2.19	1.29	2.71	3.87
43. What is it about you that you wish others could know?	3.36	1.77	1.84	3.66
44. Describe your first love. *	4.21	2.51	1.31	3.66
45. What is your idea of a perfect date?	3.23	2.13	1.64	4.21
46. What is your favorite romantic gesture?	3.54	2.20	1.51	4.23
47. What is your idea of the perfect romantic gift?	3.24	2.10	1.51	4.17
48. What is your idea of the perfect romantic vacation?	3.53	2.33	1.57	4.21
49. What qualities do you look for in a romantic partner?	3.86	2.46	1.74	4.39
50. Do you plan to marry? Why or why not? *	3.40	2.41	1.74	4.10
51. Do you plan to have children? Why or why not? *	3.51	2.56	1.73	4.10
52. Have you ever had a one night stand, or anything like it?	4.06	3.61	1.84	2.27
53. Do you believe in God?	3.79	3.91	2.14	3.66
54. What do you think should be the role of religion in today's world?	3.51	4.14	2.51	3.14
55. What is your opinion of prayer in schools?	3.40	4.01	2.33	3.13

56. Could it be argued that one religion is more harmful or beneficial than another?	3.49	4.27	2.57	2.47
57. Do you believe there is anything spiritual or religious about sex?	3.77	4.20	2.20	2.86
58. What are you most grateful for in life?	3.24	2.09	1.67	4.10
59. If you could live in a TV family, which would it be? *	1.99	1.47	2.03	3.71
60. What place in the world would you most like to visit?	2.21	1.50	1.83	4.21
61. What is a goal that you have set for yourself recently?	2.99	1.57	1.49	4.10
62. If your home were engulfed in fire, what 2 things would you save?	3.01	2.16	1.50	3.21
63. What kinds of music do you like to listen to? *	2.01	1.83	2.67	4.07
64. What would you change about yourself if you could? *	3.19	2.01	1.71	3.19
65. What would be the first thing you would do if you won the lottery? *	2.56	2.10	1.97	4.14
66. Describe a leader you admire.	2.61	2.31	2.56	3.90
67. Do you have any pets?	1.63	1.06	1.16	4.03
68. What's your favorite TV show?	1.69	1.24	1.91	3.97
69. What's your favorite musician?	1.81	1.39	2.19	4.16
70. What is your favorite movie?	1.81	1.36	2.03	4.19
71. Talk about one of your favorite childhood memories.	2.99	1.47	1.59	4.16
72. What is one of your favorite hobbies? Why do you like it? *	2.51	1.60	1.74	4.30
73. What awards or honors have you received?	2.57	1.59	1.67	3.91
74. What are three adjectives that describe you?	2.79	1.70	1.83	3.84
75. What interesting places have you visited?	2.30	1.36	1.53	4.37
76. What was the single most significant turning point in your life?	3.93	2.60	1.71	3.61
77. What was your biggest childhood fear?	2.96	1.84	1.50	2.67
78. When you were a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?	2.23	1.37	1.61	3.70
79. Are you a morning or night person?	1.80	1.49	1.10	3.50
80. What is your biggest pet peeve? *	2.34	2.10	1.30	2.93
81. If you could be a comic strip character, who would it be?	1.67	1.31	1.43	3.36
82. What do you do when you feel sad or depressed?	3.44	2.26	1.50	2.26
83. What do you do when you feel angry or upset?	3.40	2.21	1.46	2.19
84. What are some little things in life that you really enjoy?	2.76	1.77	1.53	3.96
85. What have you always wanted to try but haven't?	2.91	1.96	1.50	3.74
86. What was the most embarrassing thing that has ever happened to you?	3.54	2.27	1.31	2.64
87. Would you consider yourself an optimist or a pessimist?	2.70	2.09	1.30	3.40
88. Describe a time when you stole something.	3.19	2.96	1.91	2.13

Author Notes

The first and second authors contributed equally to this manuscript. This publication was supported in part by grant number T32 MH19728 from NIMH, and NRSA F31 MH64238-01 awarded to the first author. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of NIMH.

Footnote

1. In all analyses reported in the Results section, mean pre-test dimension ratings for each questions were used as predictor variables. We were concerned that participant ratings of the questions may have been influenced by their question selection during the main experimental task. For example, it is reasonable to believe that participants may have been reluctant to rate questions that they did not choose when interacting with a Black partner as high in race-relatedness or high in positivity. Therefore, we chose to report statistics based on the pre-test ratings. However, results using participants' values in lieu of pre-test values paralleled the results reported here.

Table 1

Formulas for calculating dependent variables for mixed-model regression, as advocated by Darlington (1990). Dependent variables were calculated to test for differences between conditions. In all regression analyses, question dimensions were the predictor variables and the dependent variable represents willingness to discuss a topic.

Model reported	Effect Measured	Calculation of dependent variable	Interpretation of Intercept	Interpretation of regression coefficients
Model 1	Question Dimensions	B/Ask + W/Ask + B/Ans + W/Ans	---	Magnitude of main effect of question dimensions on overall willingness to discuss
Model 2	Role	(B/Ans + W/Ans) - (B/Ask + W/Ask)	Main effect of role on overall willingness	Interactive effects question dimensions and role
Model 3	Race	(B/Ask + B/Ans) – (W/Ask + W/Ans)	Main effect of Race on overall willingness	Interactive effects of question dimensions and race
Model 4	Race X Role	(B/Ans + W/Ask) – (B/ask + W/Ans)	Interactive effect of race and role on overall willingness	Interactive effect of question dimensions, race, and role

Table 2

Model[1]		Beta	t	Sig.
1 Question Dimensions	Intimacy	-.59	6.31	<.01
	Controversy	-.08	.69	ns
	Race-relatedness	.18	2.31	<.05
	Positivity	.27	2.87	<.01
Model2		Beta	t	Sig.
2: Role (Answer – Ask)	Intercept		3.15	<.01
	Intimacy	-.11	.90	ns
	Controversy	.48	2.97	<.01
	Race-relatedness	-.10	.97	ns
	Positivity	-.25	2.01	<.05
Model3		Beta	t	Sig.
3: Race (Black – White)	Intercept		6.28	<.01
	Intimacy	-.38	3.18	<.01
	Controversy	.06	.42	ns
	Race-relatedness	-.21	2.09	<.05
	Positivity	-.67	5.74	<.01
Model4		Beta	t	Sig.
4: Race x Role	Intercept		6.64	<.01
	Intimacy	-.55	5.19	<.01
	Controversy	-.12	.87	ns
	Race-relatedness	.18	2.00	=.05
	Positivity	.17	1.64	=.11

[1] Criterion variable: B/Ask + W/Ask + B/Ans + W/Ans

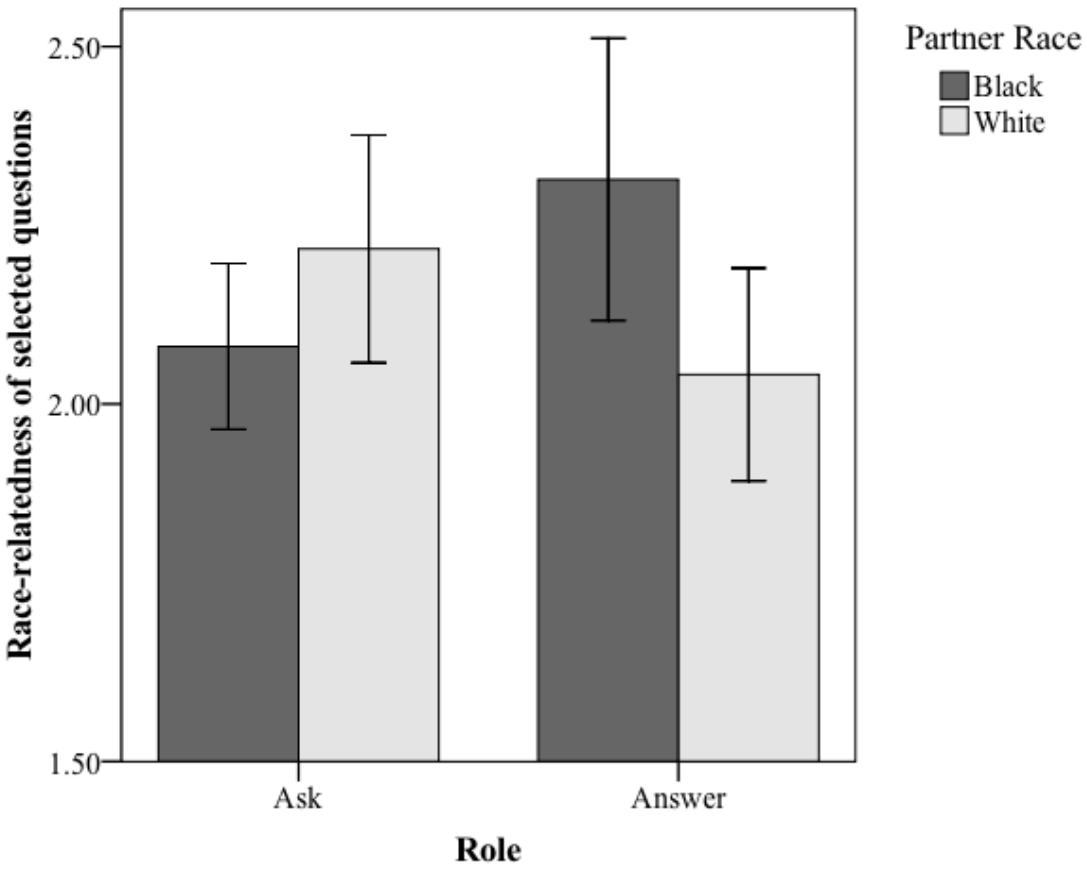
[2] Criterion variable: (B/Ans + W/Ans) - (B/Ask + W/Ask)

[3] Criterion variable: (B/Ask + B/Ans) – (W/Ask + W/Ans)

[4] Criterion variable: (B/Ans + W/Ask) – (B/ask + W/Ans)

Figure Captions

Figure 1. Experiment 2: Participants preferred to answer more race-related questions of a Black partner relative to a White partner, but preferred to ask more race-related questions of a White partner.


Partner Race
Black
White
Race-relatedness of selected questions
2.50
2.00
1.50
Ask
Answer
Role